

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION

MICHAEL RAY ROBINSON,

Petitioner,

Case No. 1:09-cv-231

v.

Honorable Paul L. Maloney

STATE OF MICHIGAN et al.,

Respondents.

OPINION

This is a habeas corpus action brought by a state prisoner pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241. Promptly after the filing of a petition for habeas corpus, the Court must undertake a preliminary review of the petition to determine whether “it plainly appears from the face of the petition and any exhibits annexed to it that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court.” Rule 4, RULES GOVERNING § 2254 CASES; *see* 28 U.S.C. § 2243. If so, the petition must be summarily dismissed. Rule 4; *see Allen v. Perini*, 424 F.2d 134, 141 (6th Cir. 1970) (district court has the duty to “screen out” petitions that lack merit on their face). A dismissal under Rule 4 includes those petitions which raise legally frivolous claims, as well as those containing factual allegations that are palpably incredible or false. *Carson v. Burke*, 178 F.3d 434, 436-37 (6th Cir. 1999). After undertaking the review required by Rule 4, the Court concludes that the petition must be dismissed without prejudice because it is premature.

Factual Allegations

Petitioner has been incarcerated at the Ingham County Jail since February 17, 2009. He names the following as Respondents: State of Michigan, Rae Lea Troutner, State of Maryland and Shanon Susan Foster. Petitioner's application for habeas corpus relief is very cryptic. It appears that he was released on parole by the Maryland Parole Commission, but subsequently was arrested in Michigan pursuant to a warrant and is being held in the Ingham County Jail. Petitioner claims that he has not been properly charged and seeks release from jail. He further alleges that he had been denied qualified, competent legal counsel for his defense. In addition, Petitioner asserts that he has been denied proper medical treatment and has suffered cruel and unusual punishment.

Discussion

Petitioner challenges his incarceration in the Ingham County Jail. Because Petitioner has not yet been convicted by a state court on the charges for which he is being held, his application for habeas relief must be dismissed as premature. Although Section 2241 gives the federal courts jurisdiction to consider pretrial habeas corpus petitions, "the courts should abstain from the exercise of that jurisdiction if the issues raised in the petition may be resolved either by trial on the merits in the state courts or by other state procedures available to the petitioner." *Atkins v. Michigan*, 644 F.2d 543, 546 (6th Cir. 1981). "Intrusion into state proceedings already underway is warranted only in extraordinary circumstances." *Id.* Federal habeas corpus relief is only available to review the merits of a state criminal charge prior to a judgment or conviction by a state court in "special circumstances." *Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court of Kentucky*, 410 U.S. 484, 489 (1973). The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals has found that a federal court may consider a pretrial habeas corpus

petition when the petitioner seeks a speedy trial and has exhausted his available state court remedies, *Atkins*, 644 F.2d at 546-47, seeks to avoid a second trial on the grounds of double jeopardy, *Delk v. Atkinson*, 665 F.2d 90, 93 (6th Cir. 1981); *see also Justices of Boston Mun. Court v. Lydon*, 466 U.S. 294, 300-03 (1984), or faces prejudice from prior ineffective assistance of counsel and due process violations on retrial, *Turner v. Tennessee*, 858 F.2d 1201, 1204 (6th Cir. 1988), *vacated on other grounds*, 492 U.S. 902 (1989). None of the aforementioned exceptions fits the present case.

Additionally, Petitioner has not alleged that he has exhausted his state court remedies. The federal courts have developed a common-law doctrine of exhaustion to protect the opportunity of the state courts to resolve constitutional issues arising within their jurisdictions and to limit federal interference in the state criminal process. *Atkins*, 644 F.2d at 546. The practical effect of this exhaustion requirement is that review of dispositive claims in habeas is not available before a state trial and appeal of the final judgment at every level of the state-court system. *See, e.g., Adams v. Michigan*, No. 1:06-cv-785, 2006 WL 3542645, at *1 (W.D. Mich. Dec. 7, 2006); *Frazier v. Michigan*, No. 06-cv-11624, 2006 WL 1156438, at *1 (E.D. Mich. Apr. 28, 2006); *Van Durmen v. Jones*, No. 4:02-cv-184, 2006 WL 322486, at *2 (W.D. Mich. Feb. 10, 2006). Petitioner's claims may be resolved at his trial or upon appeal of the final judgment to the state courts. Accordingly, the filing of Petitioner's application for habeas corpus relief was premature and will be dismissed.

Petitioner's remaining claims that he has been denied medical treatment and subjected to cruel and unusual punishment at the Ingham County Jail are not properly raised in a habeas corpus action. Where a prisoner is challenging the very fact or duration of his physical imprisonment and the relief that he seeks is a determination that he is entitled to immediate release or a speedier release from that imprisonment, his sole federal remedy is a petition for writ of habeas

corpus. *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 500 (1973). However, habeas corpus is not available to prisoners who are complaining of the conditions of their confinement or mistreatment during their incarceration. See *Martin v. Overton*, 391 F.3d 710, 714 (6th Cir. 2004); *Lutz v. Hemingway*, 476 F. Supp. 2d 715, 718 (E.D. Mich. 2007). Complaints like the ones raised by Petitioner, which involve conditions of confinement, “do not relate to the legality of the petitioner’s confinement, nor do they relate to the legal sufficiency of the criminal court proceedings which resulted in the incarceration of the petitioner.” *Id.* (quoting *Maddux v. Rose*, 483 F. Supp. 661, 672 (E.D. Tenn. 1980)). An inmate like Petitioner may, however, bring claims that challenge the conditions of confinement under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. *Id.* Where, as here, the claims about the conditions of confinement are not cognizable in an action under § 2254, the district court must dismiss the habeas action without prejudice to allow the petitioner to raise his potential civil rights claims properly in a § 1983 action. *Martin*, 391 F.3d at 714.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing, the Court will summarily dismiss Petitioner’s application without prejudice because it is premature.

Certificate of Appealability

Under 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2), the Court must determine whether a certificate of appealability should be granted. A certificate should issue if Petitioner has demonstrated a “substantial showing of a denial of a constitutional right.” 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). This Court’s dismissal of Petitioner’s action under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing § 2254 Cases is a determination that the habeas action, on its face, lacks sufficient merit to warrant service. It would be highly unlikely for this Court to grant a certificate, thus indicating to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals that

an issue merits review, when the Court has already determined that the action is so lacking in merit that service is not warranted. *See Love v. Butler*, 952 F.2d 10 (1st Cir. 1991) (it is “somewhat anomalous” for the court to summarily dismiss under Rule 4 and grant a certificate); *Hendricks v. Vasquez*, 908 F.2d 490 (9th Cir. 1990) (requiring reversal where court summarily dismissed under Rule 4 but granted certificate); *Dory v. Comm’r of Corr. of the State of New York*, 865 F.2d 44, 46 (2d Cir. 1989) (it was “intrinsically contradictory” to grant a certificate when habeas action does not warrant service under Rule 4); *Williams v. Kullman*, 722 F.2d 1048, 1050 n.1 (2d Cir. 1983) (issuing certificate would be inconsistent with a summary dismissal).

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals has disapproved issuance of blanket denials of a certificate of appealability. *Murphy v. Ohio*, 263 F.3d 466 (6th Cir. 2001). Rather, the district court must “engage in a reasoned assessment of each claim” to determine whether a certificate is warranted. *Id.* at 467. Each issue must be considered under the standards set forth by the Supreme Court in *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473 (2000). *Murphy*, 263 F.3d at 467. Consequently, this Court has examined each of Petitioner’s claims under the *Slack* standard. Under *Slack*, 529 U.S. at 484, to warrant a grant of the certificate, “[t]he petitioner must demonstrate that reasonable jurists would find the district court’s assessment of the constitutional claims debatable or wrong.” *Id.* “A petitioner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that . . . jurists could conclude the issues presented are adequate to deserve encouragement to proceed further.” *Miller-El v. Cockrell*, 537 U.S. 322, 327 (2003). In applying this standard, the Court may not conduct a full merits review, but must limit its examination to a threshold inquiry into the underlying merit of Petitioner’s claims. *Id.*

The Court finds that reasonable jurists could not conclude that this Court's dismissal of Petitioner's claims was debatable or wrong. Therefore, the Court will deny Petitioner a certificate of appealability.

A Judgment consistent with this Opinion will be entered.

Dated: April 17, 2009

/s/ Paul L. Maloney
Paul L. Maloney
Chief United States District Judge